

THE GULL



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY // VOL. 100 NO. 1 WINTER 2017



YEARS OF GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON



Eco-Education students plant native plants at MLK Jr. Regional Shoreline.

HONORING A CENTURY OF WORK THAT BENEFITS BIRDS AND PEOPLE

BY CINDY MARGULIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This year, Golden Gate Audubon Society marks its Centennial of engaging people to protect our region's native and migratory birds. Our mission is as relevant today as ever. It's thrilling—as well as humbling—to realize that our dynamic, grassroots conservation organization is now as old as the venerable National Park Service!

As we reflected on 100 years of effort by GGAS members producing science, advocacy, and education to protect our region's bird populations, we pondered how best to

honor such an impressive legacy. Our Board and our Centennial Committee agreed: Let's leverage the Centennial to expand the constituency of support for bird conservation in the Bay Area!

In hopes of engaging more people to join, and support our work, we've produced a **vibrant traveling exhibit** that will be hosted sequentially in five major public venues this year. Everywhere it appears, we'll celebrate with familiar friends and meet new ones who can join our cause. Golden Gate Audubon's effectiveness, after all, is in

sharing our science and our insights with others: We talk to policymakers, municipalities, developers, professional architects and arborists, and allied environmental groups, as well as to our fellow citizens, friends, and neighbors.

People don't necessarily realize the breadth of GGAS's achievements: Golden Gate Audubon played key roles in the protection and acquisition of vital bird habitats that today are public parklands treasured by everyone, not just birders. We're currently restoring habitat at eight different *public* land sites to enhance survival odds for local birds while simultaneously improving the landscape, water, and air quality for some of the Bay Area's densest urban communities.

And our Eco-Education program is empowering the next generation of eco-stewards through hands-on nature education and a terrific STEM science program for hundreds of the most disadvantaged urban public schoolchildren each year.

Our tiny staff will marshal more than 3,000 volunteers during 2017 to accomplish all this work...and more!

In GGAS's 100th year, we want people to understand how our century-long commitment to conserving local birds has also enhanced their lives, and how GGAS is more relevant to our shared Bay Area communities than ever.

Our vibrant exhibit will feature compelling bird photography by talented volunteer photographers, as well as vignettes from some of our wonderful volunteers. We hope you'll come see it...and bring a friend or two who might want to be a part of our next century of conservation achievements!

NEWS BRIEFS

Bird-safe Building Standards

The City of Richmond became the third city in our membership area—after San Francisco and Oakland—to enact bird-safe building standards. Passed in November 2016 with input from GGAS, the rules will help prevent bird-window collisions. For details, see <http://tinyurl.com/h7p5449>.

Lake Merritt Docents Needed

Share your love of birds as a volunteer docent at Lake Merritt in Oakland, the country's first wildlife refuge and home to nesting egrets and herons. Spend two hours on at least two days from mid-March through June. Contact volunteer@goldengateaudubon.org about training.

Share Your GGAS Stories

Help celebrate our Centennial by sharing your stories. What makes Golden Gate Audubon Society meaningful or important to you? Do you have favorite GGAS experiences, or maybe photos from "the olden days?" Email Ilana with your thoughts and memories about GGAS at idebare@goldengateaudubon.org.

Field Trips in 2017

We've got a great line-up of field trips in 2017, including some tied to highlights of our 100-year history. If you don't receive our monthly Field Trips e-newsletter, contact ggas@goldengateaudubon.org. And look for our brochure of exciting Birdathon trips in your mailbox in February.



100 YEARS OF INSPIRING PEOPLE TO PROTECT BAY AREA BIRDS

BY ILANA DEBARE

Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline.

Jerry Ting

In 1917: The Golden Gate and Bay Bridges did not exist. Women didn't have the right to vote. People chilled their food in ice boxes. The fastest way to travel between coasts was a five-day train ride. And in San Francisco, a small group of birdwatchers formed an organization called Audubon Association of the Pacific for the purpose of studying, enjoying, and protecting birds.

Today that organization—one of the oldest conservation groups in California—is known as the Golden Gate Audubon Society, with 7,000 members in San Francisco and the East Bay.

The story of Golden Gate Audubon's first 100 years is a story of individual bird lovers who joined together to share their passion, educate others, and advocate for Northern California wildlife.

But it also reflects broader themes:

The story of the Bay Area's growth into an urban, industrial metropolis...and then people's rediscovery of the value of our natural areas.

The story of the rise of the modern environmental movement.

The story of a grassroots organization responding to social changes—world wars, economic ups and downs, and technological advances—yet remaining true to its founding passion for birds, devotion to citizen science, and commitment to conservation and education.

Golden Gate Audubon's century of achievements includes helping create beloved parks such as Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline, Point Pinole Regional Shoreline, Heron's Head Park, and the Don Edwards S.F. Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

GGAS led the campaign to choose a State Bird, wrestled with oil companies over toxic spills on the Bay, helped save Mono Lake and the open spaces of West Marin, protected Alameda's nesting colony of endangered Least Terns, confronted the wind power industry over bird deaths at Altamont Pass, and supported the emergence of numerous allied conservation organizations.

Along the way, GGAS hosted over 1,100 guest speakers on ornithology and conservation and led over 5,000 field trips!

This is the story of Golden Gate Audubon's first century.

FIGHTING OILS SPILLS FROM THE START

In 1917, birdwatchers who had taken Harold Bryant's nature study class at U.C. Berkeley banded together to form Audubon Association of the Pacific—at the time, the only Audubon group between Los Angeles and Portland.

Led by founding president Carlos Lastreto, a successful coffee importer whose parents had come to San Francisco during the Gold Rush, their goal was to study, enjoy, and protect birds.

The first Audubon societies had formed in the late 1880s in response to mass slaughter of birds for feathers for the millinery trade. The fledgling AAP wasted no time in tackling another big threat to birds—deadly oil spills on California waters.

With automobile ownership spreading, oil shipment had become a fast-growing business. Tankers were discharging contaminated ballast water off the coast near the Farallon Islands, one of the most important seabird and marine mammal breeding colony sites on the Pacific Coast. Oil slicks were being reported every two to three weeks.

In 1919, Lastreto and a colleague from the California Academy of Sciences met with oil company officials and convinced them to begin recycling waste oil at onshore facilities rather than dumping at sea.

“These actions were a crucial early step in protecting the Farallones and were probably among the first organized conservation efforts to stop oil dumping at sea,” Harry Fuller wrote in *The Gull* in 2007.

GGAS continued to work against oil spills throughout the century. After a 1937 tanker collision off of Point Bonita, Audubon members documented 188 dead sea birds between Cliff House and Mussel Rock. In 1971, in the wake of another disastrous spill, GGAS joined clean-up efforts and convened a meeting between Standard Oil and Bay Area Audubon chapters.

And in 2007, when the Cosco Busan spilled 58,000 gallons of oil into the Bay, GGAS volunteers jumped into immediate



Carlos Lastreto, the founding president of Audubon Association of the Pacific, and his membership card.

action as part of the Oiled Wildlife Care Network, formed in 1994. Over the next two weeks, more than 200 GGAS members identified 3,000 birds in need of rescue.

THE EARLY DAYS

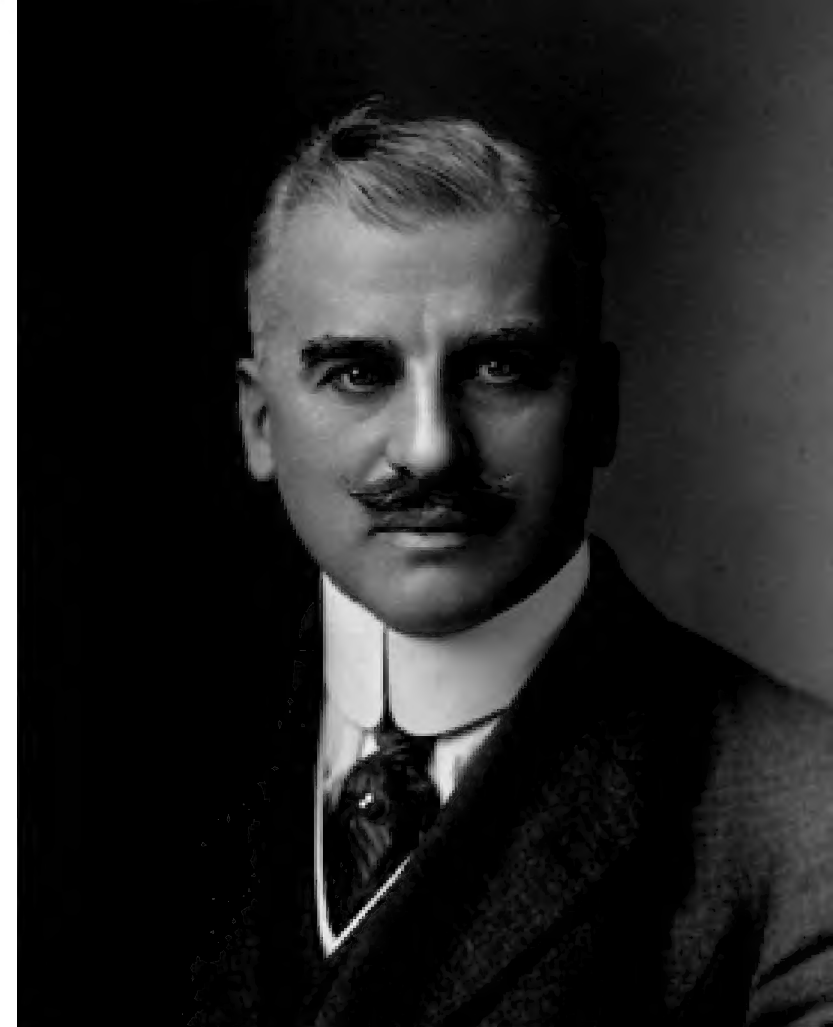
Audubon’s earliest activities were monthly field trips and speakers on topics in ornithology and natural history—programs that continue to this day. With cars not yet ubiquitous, field trips meant travel by trolleys, trains, boats, and foot.

“*San Francisco members will take the Key Route boat at 9:00 a.m. and Twelfth Street train at pier to end of line at Second avenue car barn,*” was how the inaugural issue of *The Gull* announced a field trip to Lake

Merritt in January 1919.

Unlike some other ornithological societies of that era, women played an active role in Audubon Association of the Pacific. Three out of nine directors elected in 1918 were women. Over time, 27 out of 52 chapter presidents have been women—just over half of all GGAS presidents..

Audubon Association of the Pacific engaged in citizen science from the start, supporting bird censuses in Golden Gate Park by the California Academy of Sci-



An oiled grebe gets care at International Bird Rescue.



The Farallon Islands remain an important sea bird nesting site.

(clockwise from top left) Courtesy of Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley; Courtesy of California Academy of Sciences; Annie Schmidt; Cheryl Reynolds/IBR

ences, Boy Scouts, and others. By the 1930s, the group was also leading annual counts at Lake Merritt, Benicia, Yosemite, and Bay Farm Island (Alameda).

AAP also promoted youth education from the start. The *San Francisco Chronicle* covered a “children’s bird diary competition” by the group in 1920 that generated 500 entries. By 1919, AAP had spawned a Junior Audubon club that was building nest boxes—an activity continued today by Golden Gate Audubon’s Eco-Education program in low-income public schools.

CHOOSING A STATE BIRD

In 1928, Audubon Association of the Pacific joined with Southern California Audubon members in an ambitious campaign to choose a state bird. Carlos Lastreto hosted a weekly 15-minute show about birds on KGO radio, while other members recruited schools, garden clubs, and chambers of commerce to join the contest. The goal was not just to select a state bird, but to increase public appreciation of birds.

“Some one bird will win a signed honor, but all our birds will be benefitted by the resulting wave of popular sentiment,” one of the organizers said in *The Gull*.

Over 130,000 ballots were cast. The



Oakland Tribune, May 24, 1929.

winning species was California Quail with 61,559 votes—easily beating Western Bluebird with 18,966, Bullock’s Oriole with 11,876, and Anna’s Hummingbird with 10,968.

DEPRESSION AND WORLD WAR

Audubon, like the rest of America, was rocked by the Great Depression of the 1930s. At first the impact was minimal. GGAS entered 1931 with 145 members, the most in its early history. It launched its first birding classes in 1932.

“Surely there has been no depression in



California Quail, the State Bird winner.

John Ehrenfeld

our enjoyment of living birds,” *The Gull* reported in February 1933, “though unfortunately the times have inevitably removed some bird enthusiasts from our active membership roll.”

Within a few years, the tone became less sunny. By 1935, membership had dropped by 20 percent to 117.

“Associations such as ours do not suffer



(right) Courtesy of Oakland Public Library; (far right) Larry Hollowood

Ducks at Lake Merritt in the early 20th century. (above right) S.F. Chronicle, January 22, 1932. (right) Western Bluebird, Runner-up for State Bird.



in membership in the early part of a depression but bear the brunt of it as time goes on," *The Gull* said in 1936. "In the beginning few people realized that the difficult times would last so long and that they would be so severe."

World War 2 also affected Audubon. The group provided field trips, movies, and copies of *The Gull* to service personnel stationed in the Bay Area. Many members left the region for military service. Dr. T. Eric Reynolds, who later became chapter president, held his own Christmas Bird Count as a naval reserve doctor in the South Pacific but said the details were a "military secret." Harold Kirker, who joined Audubon as a youth in the 1930s and remains a member today, submitted bird sightings from his military training in Colorado.

Meanwhile, GGAS member Misaye Watanabe also left the Bay Area during the war—interned with other Japanese Americans at Amache, Colorado. Watanabe, who was 26, continued birding during her internment and mailed a box with three

Lark Sparrow eggs and two Cowbird eggs back to her friends in the chapter.

URBAN GROWTH AND PRECIOUS OASES

With the end of the war, civic life resumed and Audubon was poised to grow. Membership doubled in 1948. The group joined National Audubon Society and changed its name from Audubon Association of the Pacific to Golden Gate Audubon Society, a reflection of the fact that the Pacific stretched much further than any single chapter could attempt to cover.



The post-war boom intensified urban growth in the Bay Area, making the natural areas within its cities increasingly precious. Two such areas that GGAS championed were Lake Merritt in Oakland and Lake Merced in San Francisco.

Audubon members had started conducting winter bird surveys at Lake Merritt in 1920. Through banding birds, they learned that the lake's ducks migrate to Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Yukon Delta in the

AT LAKE MERCED

THE AUDUBON Association of the Pacific has become interested in setting aside a portion of Lake Merced as a place where birds may be free from boat molestation.

Joseph J. Webb, secretary of the organization, reports that at a recent meeting the association passed a resolution requesting the Public Utilities Commission to set a boom across the southerly end of the lake.

Meeting with the commission, and also with Dr. Alkalay, president of the Pacific Rod and Gun Club, the resolution was favorably received.

Following the conferences, Members Byington and Cahill of the commission granted the request with the information that the boom would be placed somewhere near the telephone line at the south end of the lake.

The Audubon Association hopes that some time in the future Lake Merced will be made as attractive to bird life as has Lake Merritt in Oakland.

(left) One of a series of bird pins crafted by Japanese-American internees in Amache, Colorado. (above) S.F. Chronicle, March 17, 1939.

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Junea Kelly (left) and friends, 1964.

JUNEA KELLY, 1887 – 1969

Junea Kelly introduced over 15,000 adult students to the wonders of Bay Area nature in 45 years of teaching "Six Trips Afield," a U.C. Extension course.

Kelly was a leader in Audubon Association of the Pacific for many years, serving as President in the 1930s and editor of the Observations column in *The Gull*. A protégé of U.C. zoology professor Harold Bryant, she led the popular Six Trips classes from 1920 until 1965, when she was 79.

"She can see more in a square yard of earth than most people find in a mile," the S.F. Chronicle wrote.

Kelly made frequent international birding trips in an era when overseas travel was not as easy as it is today. But she was also a determined advocate for the local wetlands of Alameda, where she lived. She led efforts in the 1960s—ultimately unsuccessful—to oppose bulldozing what developers called "this useless marsh and mudflat" of Bay Farm Island.

One of her greatest legacies was mentoring Elsie Roemer, the next generation of conservation leadership in Alameda. Roemer in turn mentored Leora Feeney, a longtime GGAS leader and champion of the island's Least Tern colony.

Current GGAS Executive Director Cindy Margulis counts Feeney as her own most influential mentor—the latest link in a century-long chain of Alameda conservation visionaries.

Today a section of the Golden Gate Park Botanical Garden is named in Junea Kelly's honor.

CASE STUDY



PROTECTING MONO LAKE AND THE KLAMATH BASIN

While Golden Gate Audubon's primary focus has always been Bay Area birds, it also played a role in key statewide conservation issues such as providing adequate water for birds in the Klamath Basin and saving Mono Lake in the Eastern Sierra.

As early as 1918, Audubon opposed draining the Klamath lakes near the Oregon border and called for them to be given to the federal government—what eventually became the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Over 80 years later, GGAS joined with other environmental groups to sue for more water in the refuge areas in 2002.

"It behooves us...to be vigilant and ready to enlist our services...against the purpose to drain the Klamath Lakes which would destroy a valuable reservation and bird-preserve," GGAS President Carlos Lastreto wrote in his year-end report for 1918.

Mono Lake became a centerpiece of GGAS's conservation work in the 1980s. Home to 2 million shorebirds, North America's second largest nesting population of California Gulls, and half the continent's Eared Grebes during fall

migration, the lake was drying up due to excessive water diversions by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

Former GGAS Vice President George Peyton mobilized National Audubon and other Audubon chapters to support the Mono Lake Committee in its legal battle to save the lake. While Peyton coordinated the committee's long-running series of lawsuits, GGAS members raised over \$100,000 for legal expenses through raffles, Birdathons, and other events.

Conservationists eventually won a landmark legal victory. And in 1994,

the state adopted a management plan to stabilize Mono Lake's water level and restore the damaged streams and wetlands that feed the lake.

"Golden Gate Audubon was the first to back the landmark public trust lawsuit, and for years raised the funds that made it possible to keep the attorneys in the courtroom," said Martha Davis, Executive Director of the Mono Lake Committee from 1983 through 1997. "How much we all owe to Golden Gate Audubon's courage and vision in protecting California's special places and natural heritage."



(clockwise from top) Mono Lake; Eared Grebes; Wetlands quilt made by GGAS members as a fundraiser. A similar quilt was raffled off to raise funds for the Mono Lake campaign.

(left) Sue Petterson; (top) Rick Lewis

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summer. One member alone banded 11,356 ducks between 1926 and 1941!

Paul Covel, a longtime GGAS leader, served as Oakland's City Naturalist at Lake Merritt from 1947 through 1975. GGAS raised money to help build the Rotary Nature Center there, and in the 1990s and 2000s advocated to restore wetlands habitat along the lake.

At Lake Merced, Audubon successfully called on the city in 1934 to restore tules and other marsh vegetation that had been stripped away. That same year it also started asking for part of the lake to be declared a wildlife refuge—a vision that still has not been realized.

"It would be great to have a significant part of Lake Merced designated as a wildlife refuge," said Dan Murphy, a past president of GGAS who has led field trips there since the early 1970s. "It's got three colonial water bird nesting sites. It provides habitat for over 50 breeding species and over 200 species total each year. It's the largest freshwater marsh between Pescadero and Point Reyes."

FIGHTING FOR SHORELINE HABITAT

From the Gold Rush through the 1950s, the history of San Francisco Bay largely involved filling in the bay for buildings, highways, airports, and garbage dumps. By 1960, there were only six miles of publicly accessible



GGAS members Junea Kelly (shown) and Elsie Roemer led efforts to save Bay Farm Island from development.

shoreline left around the entire Bay. Its wetlands had been reduced from 190,000 acres to less than 38,000 acres.

The rise of modern environmentalism—including groups like Save the Bay, whose dynamic founders in 1961 included GGAS member Sylvia McLaughlin—fed a movement to reclaim the shoreline for wildlife and people. Over the next four decades,

Golden Gate Audubon fought numerous battles to preserve and restore shoreline habitat.

In Berkeley, GGAS successfully opposed plans to fill Aquatic Park in 1948. From the 1970s through the 1990s, it defended the Emeryville Crescent as vital habitat for shorebirds. In San Francisco, GGAS pushed for creation of Crissy Lagoon in



Elsie Roemer.

Oakland Tribune

ELSIE ROEMER, 1892 – 1991

Elsie Roemer started observing the birds of Alameda in the 1950s, inspired in part by Junea Kelly. Over the next four decades, this Alameda High School teacher collected vast amounts of citizen-science data on local birds and led numerous battles to protect the shoreline.

"I learned from her, 'If you really love something, gather data,'" recalled Leora Feeney, founder of GGAS's Friends of the Alameda Reserve committee. "Set yourself up so you have the information, because crying and pounding tables just won't do it."

Roemer's personal bird observations turned into a team census of Alameda birds from 1971-75 for the California Department of Fish & Game. She was among the first observers to document endangered California Least Terns nesting in the East Bay, laying the groundwork for GGAS's decades-long work to protect the tern colony.

When developers sought to fill 900+ acres of prime wetlands on Bay Farm Island in 1964, Roemer led a broad-based—but ultimately unsuccessful—opposition campaign. She had



(above) GGAS President Claire Johnson presents a contribution to the purchase of Pt. Pinole to the president of the East Bay Regional Park District board. (right) Point Pinole Regional Shoreline today.

Jerry Ting



the decommissioned Presidio, which now teems with ducks, herons and other wildlife. GGAS also promoted restoration of wetlands along the city's industrial southeastern waterfront—leading to the creation of Heron's Head Park in 1993 and ongoing restoration work at the Port of San Francisco's Pier 94 since 2002.

CREATING PARKLANDS

Unlike some other Audubon chapters, Golden Gate Audubon never had the good fortune of having its own nature sanctuary. But over decades, the organization used its own funds as well as member bequests to strategically assist in creating public parklands that provide valuable habitat for

wildlife as well as recreation for people.

In the 1950s, GGAS joined with other local Audubon chapters and the Sierra Club to operate a new 1,000-acre salt marsh sanctuary that eventually became part of the Don Edwards S.F. Bay National Wildlife Refuge. In 1973, it contributed \$100,000 to the purchase of Point Pinole Regional Shoreline in Richmond for the East Bay Regional Park District, and in 1992 provided \$25,000 to buy the Marin Islands in San Pablo Bay, now part of the S.F. Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

More recently, in 2004 GGAS won a 16-year battle to protect open space in Orinda—adding 1,300 acres to Sibley Volcanic Regional Park and other public

lands, and creating a crucial wildlife corridor between north and south Contra Costa County.

AUDUBON GROWS

Golden Gate Audubon grew in tandem with the Bay Area economy and the environmental movement, adding its first office in 1971 and first paid staff person shortly afterwards. It adapted to new technologies, launching a tape-recorded Rare Bird Alert phone hotline in 1974 and buying its first office computer in 1984.

"A committee has been set up to evaluate the possibility of a personal computer for the office," GGAS proudly announced in 1983. "With 6,000 members, birding and

more success preventing Doolittle Pond from becoming an extension of Alameda's dump.

Roemer was diplomatic and gracious, yet dogged. In 1971, her discovery of rubble in Arrowhead Marsh—which had just been declared a wildlife refuge—forced the Port of Oakland to stop dumping there. She went on to help lead a citizens' panel advising the Port on San Leandro Bay.

In 1979, the East Bay Regional Park District honored Roemer, then 86, by dedicating the Elsie Roemer Bird Sanctuary, a six-acre section of salt marsh along Alameda's southern shore.

That same year, GGAS created the Elsie Roemer Conservation Award as its highest annual conservation honor. Winners of the Roemer Conservation Awards have included public figures like Congressman Phillip Burton, conservation groups like International Bird Rescue, and GGAS activists like Dan Murphy, Alan Hopkins, Arthur Feinstein, and Roemer's protégé Leora Feeney.



Rick Lewis

Elsie Roemer Bird Sanctuary.

field trip lists, as well as *The Gull* to publish each month, we really need one!”

Through it all, GGAS maintained its welcoming, informal culture, with field trip leaders who delighted in introducing people to birding and members who enthusiastically shared their sightings and travels.

“I wonder if you all feel, as I do, the friendly spirit that permeates Audubon, that makes us want to stay on and visit with everyone after each meeting?” wrote GGAS member and nature filmmaker Laurel Reynolds in 1952. “A visitor from New York said ‘Audubon is like a fraternity’—and it is, if by fraternity one means a group bound together in friendliness and good will, with the common purpose of enjoying and helping others to enjoy the natural beauty of our world.”

That “friendly spirit” helped make Golden Gate Audubon unusually supportive of younger, nascent conservation groups. Back issues of *The Gull* are studded with announcements of new organizations—such as Point Reyes Bird Observatory (1965) and International Bird



John Ehrenfeld

Ospreys were among many species endangered by DDT in the 1960s. Today, thanks to the environmental movement, DDT is banned and growing numbers of Ospreys nest along S.F. Bay.

Rescue (1972)—along with exhortations to support them.

“San Francisco is threatened with piecemeal destruction by industrial development,” *The Gull* said in a front page story announcing the founding of Save the Bay in July 1961. “Please, rush your membership dollar to the Save San Francisco Bay Association.”



GGAS field trip to the Farallones in 1969, featured in *The Gull*.



Paul Covell releases two banded Northern Pintails, from *People Are For the Birds* by Paul Covell.

PAUL COVEL, 1908 – 1990

For much of the 20th century, Paul Covell’s name was synonymous with Oakland wildlife.

Covell, a former Golden Gate Audubon board president, served as the City of Oakland’s naturalist from 1947 to 1975—the first naturalist in the U.S. to be employed by a municipal government.

A high school graduate and self-taught biologist, Covell started giving bird talks at Lake Merritt in 1934, mentored by GGAS member and Boy Scout leader Brighton “Bugs” Cain.

Over the next fifty years, Covell introduced thousands of children and adults to the water birds of the lake as well as the wildlife of the Oakland Hills. He established a refuge for injured birds at Lake Merritt and marshaled support to build the Rotary Nature Center there.

“Paul Covell...has contributed more to the conservation consciousness of the people of the Eastbay than any other single individual,” said California state parks director William Penn Mott Jr. in 1970.

Covell’s advocacy work is less well known. But he served as GGAS’s conservation chair from 1962 through 1975, penning “Covell’s Conservation Corner” in each month’s *Gull*. He rallied GGAS members through countless campaigns—from supporting the creation of Point Reyes National Seashore (1962) to successfully opposing the extension of a major street right through the middle of San Leandro Bay (1986).

Amidst all his achievements, only one may not meet the approval of history: introducing Canada Geese to Lake Merritt.

In the 1940s, Canada Geese were a relative rarity here. Covell was determined to remedy

PROTECTING TERNS AND TILTING AT WINDMILLS

Through the past century, GGAS always had a stream of activities going on—field trips, monthly speakers, birding classes, youth programs, and letter-writing drives. On top of this, it often mounted high-profile conservation campaigns that lasted for years and sent out ripples far beyond the Bay Area.

Two of its more recent campaigns involved protecting Alameda's breeding colony of endangered California Least Terns, and reducing the deadly toll on birds of the wind turbines at Altamont Pass.

GGAS leader Elsie Roemer may have been the first person to document Least Terns breeding in Alameda. Later, in the 1980s, they were discovered nesting at the Alameda Naval Air Station, where they had adopted the flat, gravelly tarmac surface as a substitute for California's dwindling supply of undisturbed sandy beaches.

Over the next 30 years, as the naval base faced decommissioning and potential development, GGAS undertook a variety of efforts to protect the terns. Golden Gate



(top) Least Tern and chick. (above) Least Terns courting.

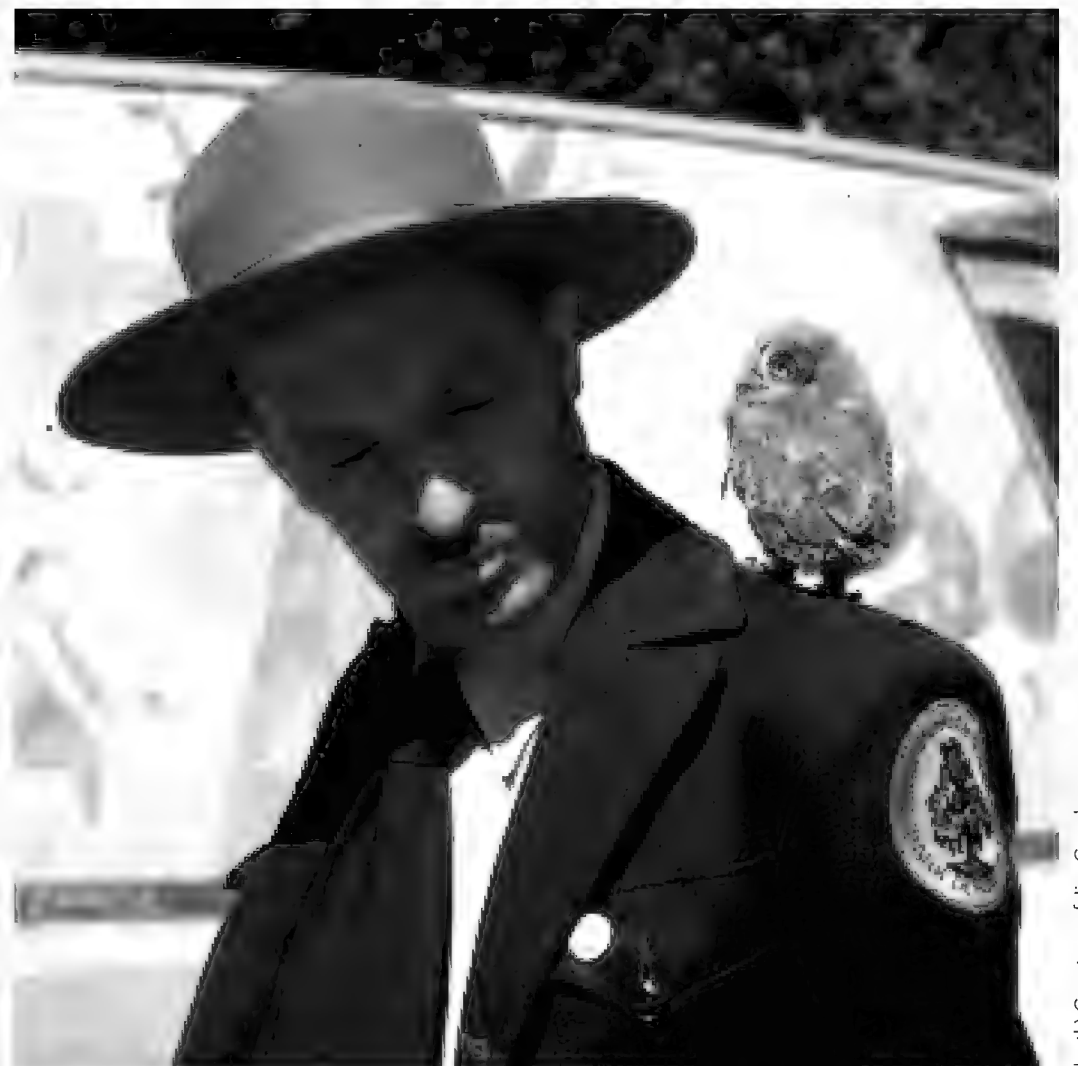
(top) James Shadle; (left) Verne Nelson



that and collected nine geese with wing injuries from a Central Valley farmer.

"The nine honkers from that farmer's pasture have grown into a thriving colony that promises to populate the Eastbay shores," he wrote proudly in 1978.

Paul was awarded GGAS's Elsie Roemer Conservation Award in 1989. In 2008, GGAS established the annual Paul Covel Education Award in his name. Past honorees include inspirational field trip leaders and volunteers such as Rusty Scalf, Bob Lewis, Denise Wight, Dave Quady, and Alan Kaplan.



(left) Paul Covel with naturalist Roger Tory Peterson at Lake Merritt. (above) Paul Covel with a fledgling Screech Owl.

(both) Courtesy of Jim Covel

Audubon member Leora Feeney formed a Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Reserve committee within GGAS. Leora and FAWR worked with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to monitor the colony, sponsored a scientific symposium on wildlife at the naval base, educated thousands of Alameda schoolchildren about the terns, and traveled to Washington D.C. to lobby for the terns with GGAS's executive director at the time, Arthur Feinstein.

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs officially assumed responsibility for the former base and committed to create a permanent wildlife reserve including the endangered Least Tern breeding area. The outcome was a welcome victory not just for the terns but for the more than 200 other species that rely on Alameda Point habitat to survive. Today GGAS volunteers continue to assist USFWS in monitoring the terns and other species, preparing the terns' breeding site in the off-season, and educating youth and adults about Alameda's important variety of wildlife.

HOLDING WIND POWER ACCOUNTABLE

The Altamont Pass in eastern Alameda County was one of the earliest and most deadly wind power sites in the U.S., kill-

LEARN MORE!

Throughout 2017, we will be running occasional articles about Golden Gate Audubon's history on our blog. Sign up to receive all our blog posts—usually one post each week—in your email inbox for free. Click on goldengateaudubon.org/subscribe.

Many back issues of *The Gull*—going back to 1919!—are now available in online archives. Two sources are the Biodiversity Heritage Library at biodiversitylibrary.org and the Internet Archive at archive.org.



ing as many as 4,700 eagles, hawks, and other birds each year in the 1990s. In 2005, GGAS and other Bay Area Audubon chapters sued Alameda County and the wind companies for failing to prevent the death of thousands of state- and federally-protected birds each year.

GGAS negotiated a settlement with the county and the wind companies that required them to modernize their facilities and site turbines in ways that are compatible with sustaining bird and bat populations in the Altamont. While not all the wind companies have met their obligations yet,

GGAS's leadership changed the national discussion around wind power siting.

"Golden Gate Audubon's willingness to take advocacy actions on raptor mortality at Altamont resulted in worldwide attention to the need to site and operate wind energy in the right places," said Garry George, Renewable Energy Director for Audubon California. "It led to federal and state guidelines and good science on how to avoid, minimize and mitigate effectively for negative impacts."

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(from left) Golden Eagle; Doug Bell, Wildlife Program Manager for the East Bay Regional Park District, investigates a dead eagle at Altamont Pass; Red-tailed Hawks near an Altamont turbine. (from left) Jerry Ting; Janice Gan/EBRPD; Bobbi Goodman

CASE STUDY



AUDUBON CANYON RANCH

In the early 1960s, developers were threatening to turn the ranches and open spaces of western Marin County into Orange County-style suburbs. Plans were drawn up to dredge Bolinas Lagoon for a marina and hotel complex, log a nearby redwood grove filled with egret and heron nests, and build a four-lane freeway along the lagoon. Developers were even hoping to build a nuclear power plant at Bodega Bay to power their new sprawling suburbs!

Dr. Marty Griffin, president of Marin Audubon, launched a bold campaign to save West Marin through strategic land acquisition. In December 1961, the Golden Gate Audubon board voted to join Marin Audubon in purchasing a 507-acre canyon that held the egret rookery and would block the proposed freeway route.

The initial goal was to raise \$300,000, the equivalent of \$2.4 million in 2016 dollars.

"This is the biggest conservation effort our GGAS has ever made," GGAS President Aileen Pearson said at the time. "Working together, we will succeed."

Audubon Canyon Ranch was

incorporated as a sanctuary and nature education center with seven directors from GGAS, seven from Marin Audubon, and three public directors. GGAS members launched a grassroots fundraising effort, served as "ranch hosts" or docents, and took part in restoration work days at the new sanctuary.

The February 1963 Gull announced a typical work day at the Ranch in language that was tongue-in-cheek but also reflective of the gender norms of that era:

"All males, willing and able, from Golden Gate and Marin Audubon Societies are summoned to appear at 10 a.m. to dig, cut, chop, lug, load, rake and burn. Bring own tools, food, wives, children, friends, Boy Scouts, warm clothing and binoculars. Warm coffee will be served."

Acquisition of that parcel – which later grew to a 1,000-acre site now appropriately named the Martin Griffin Preserve – was key to protecting West Marin's natural character.

ACR is now an independent non-profit with four separate North Bay

nature preserves, but GGAS still holds a designated seat on the board and GGAS members still serve as docents. The egret rookery moved elsewhere several years ago, possibly spooked by a rebounding population of Bald Eagles, but the ranch remains a delightful site for birding and hiking.



(top) Audubon Canyon Ranch in the 1960s.
(above) Great Egrets nesting at Audubon Canyon Ranch in 2010.

(left) Larry Goodwin; (top) Courtesy of Audubon Canyon Ranch

CASE STUDY



THE LONG BATTLE FOR SAN LEANDRO BAY

Perhaps the longest shoreline battle for GGAS involved San Leandro Bay, the body of water between Alameda and what today is Oakland International Airport.

Once encompassing 2,600 acres of vibrant tidal marsh, the bay was a state game refuge popular with hunters as late as the 1930s. In 1938 GGAS pressed unsuccessfully to have a bird sanctuary created there to “protect the nesting ground of the California Clapper Rail.”

Construction of Oakland’s football stadium and other nearby businesses in the early 1960s effectively destroyed one section of marsh. Then, in the mid-60s, developers filled in the extensive marshes on Bay Farm Island, despite strong community opposition led by GGAS’s Junea Kelly.

In 1971, conservationists won designation of 50-acre Arrowhead Marsh as a refuge. But the Port of Oakland, which owned much of the adjacent land, was determined to develop in the area. Elsie Roemer discovered the Port illegally filling part of the new refuge, took the issue to the media, and led a citizens’ advisory

group on the future of the area. One result was the transfer of 565 acres from the Port to the East Bay Regional Park District in 1975 – forming the core of today’s Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline.

The next skirmish came in the mid-1980s, when the Port proposed filling over 100 acres of seasonal wetlands near Arrowhead Marsh. GGAS sued and ultimately won a settlement that required the Port to restore 73 acres as a wetland, an area today known as the “New Marsh.”

In 2017, San Leandro Bay’s marshland is barely a whisper of its former self. But the

remaining areas host thousands of ducks and shorebirds each winter, thanks to Golden Gate Audubon. Arrowhead Marsh is one of the best places in the Bay Area to spot Ridgway’s Rails (formerly called Clapper Rails), and the New Marsh is a proven release site for rehabilitated herons and egrets.

Now Golden Gate Audubon holds popular volunteer restoration days at MLK Shoreline each month, and our Eco-Education students love using it as an outdoor learning lab and classroom on field trips.



(clockwise from top) Ridgway’s Rail at Arrowhead Marsh; Arrowhead Marsh before the surrounding area was fully developed; Birding at MLK Jr. Shoreline today.

(clockwise from top) Jerry Ting; Oakland Public Library; Ilana DeBate

CONTINUED from page 12

EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION

Starting with those Junior Audubon members building nest boxes in the 1920s, GGAS has always committed itself to educating the next generation of bird lovers and environmental stewards. But the exact form of that education has changed over the years.

The early years focused on collaboration with Boy Scout groups. In the mid-1960s, GGAS co-sponsored teacher trainings in

nature education at Aquatic Park with the City of Berkeley. In the 1990s, it provided an Audubon Adventures curriculum, purchased from National Audubon, to over 100 public school classrooms.

In 1999, GGAS launched its award-winning Eco-Education program, which brings hands-on nature education and field trips to nine Title I (low-income) elementary schools in Oakland, San Francisco and Richmond. Over the past 17 years, the program has served over 16,000 students and their family members.

"THE FUTURE IS UP TO US"

Carlos Lastreto and his founding colleagues would probably be dumbstruck by the 21st century face of birding: eBird postings, iPhones that play obscure bird calls at the touch of a finger, birders jetting to Alaska to bulk up their Big Year lists.

But they would feel right at home with the love of birds, conservation ethos, citizen science enthusiasm, and welcoming atmosphere of today's Golden Gate Audubon.

GGAS today has over 7,000 members and will mobilize over 3,000 volunteers this



(top and far left) Eva Guralnick; (left) Anthony DeCicco

(top and above) GGAS Eco-Education students explore Point Pinole during a field trip in 2015. (right) Back at school, they build nest boxes for their schoolyard and for nearby parks.



(clockwise from above) 2014 Oakland Christmas Bird Count; GGAS volunteers start to clean up and restore the Port of San Francisco's Pier 94 in 2002; Restored wetlands at Pier 94 today. (clockwise from above) Ilana DeBare; Anne McTavish; Lee Karney

year to restore habitat, lead field trips, serve as birding docents, and assist in the Eco-Education program. It sponsors more than 160 field trips and enrolls 450 people in birding classes.

GGAS's Oakland Christmas Bird Count—now entering its 77th year—has brought more people into the field than any other CBC in recent years. Its San Francisco CBC, which took a hiatus from 1963 to 1983—is now going strong in its 35th consecutive year.

San Francisco Bay offers more opportunities for birding and outdoor recreation now than half a century ago, thanks to citizen efforts to preserve and restore the shoreline.

"There are more good places to bird now, because back then it was very difficult to access places along the Bay," said former GGAS board member George Peyton, who has birded here since the 1960s. "The access we have now to see water birds, and the habitats that have been created, are a huge improvement. This is one of the great conservation successes in this country, and it's still going on."

Yet the road ahead for GGAS also includes some too-familiar challenges.

Toxic spills continue to plague the Bay. Wildlife in the Klamath Basin and Delta

are endangered by diversion of water for agriculture. Bay Area birds are threatened by degraded habitat, development, feral cats, and off-leash dogs.

The future also brings one large, unprecedented challenge—climate change. A landmark report by National Audubon in 2014 estimated that 314 out of 588 North American bird species will face severe population declines by 2080 due to climate-related changes in their livable habitat. That includes many beloved Bay Area species such as Black Oystercatchers, Allen's Hummingbirds, Black-crowned Night-Herons, and Brown Pelicans.

But Golden Gate Audubon has faced challenges before—and, as its history shows, won important victories for wildlife and habitat.

Sixty years ago, GGAS President T. Eric Reynolds gave a speech marking the group's 40th anniversary. He warned of the toll of California's post-war population growth on wildlife. It was more important than ever, he said, to fight for "the peace of mind that comes from watching the sun set over a mountain meadow, or the flash of curlew's wings over a morning marsh."

"The future, while not exactly rose-colored, is far from hopeless," Reynolds said, in words that apply equally well today. "To a great extent, the dedication, zeal, energy, and unselfishness of those now living will determine the heritage we leave to our descendants.... The future is up to us. We must defend those things we hold to be important."

BRING 100 FOR 100

Launch a second successful century for Golden Gate Audubon by helping us grow! Our goal is 100 new members in our 100th year. We're offering a special thank-you gift to the first 100 members who convince a friend to join GGAS—a beautiful cloisonné pin with our Centennial logo, both for you and your friend. See goldengateaudubon.org/bring100 for details and sign-up.



VISIT OUR CENTENNIAL EXHIBIT

Throughout 2017, we will celebrate our Centennial with a traveling museum exhibit on 100 Years of Protecting Bay Area Birds. You're invited! Please check with each venue for the days and hours it is open.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA BUILDING ATRIUM

455 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco
January 3 – 30, 2017

TILDEN PARK ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER

600 Canon Drive, Berkeley
February 1 – March 31, 2017

OAKLAND CITY HALL & DALZIEL BUILDING

250 Frank Ogawa Plaza, Oakland
May 25 – July 7, 2017

TIDES/THOREAU CENTER AT THE PRESIDIO

1012 Torney Street, San Francisco
July 10 – September 29, 2017

LINDSAY WILDLIFE EXPERIENCE

1931 First Avenue, Walnut Creek
October 3, 2017 – January 2, 2018

There will be a private, GGAS members-only reception at each site. Because venue space is limited, we will invite people to the reception nearest their homes. Invitations will be sent by email; if you don't have email access, please contact us for a printed invitation at 510.843.2222.

At right, one of the panels from the Centennial Exhibit.



A CENTURY OF GULLS

As Golden Gate Audubon evolved, so did *The Gull*! August 1949 was the first issue to be published as Golden Gate Audubon Society, not Audubon Association of the Pacific. May 1991 was the first published on recycled paper with soy-based ink. By the 2000s, the format had expanded to 8.5 x 11 and started to include photos. In 2013, *The Gull* became a full-color quarterly publication, supplemented by monthly email newsletters and weekly blog posts.



1949



1991

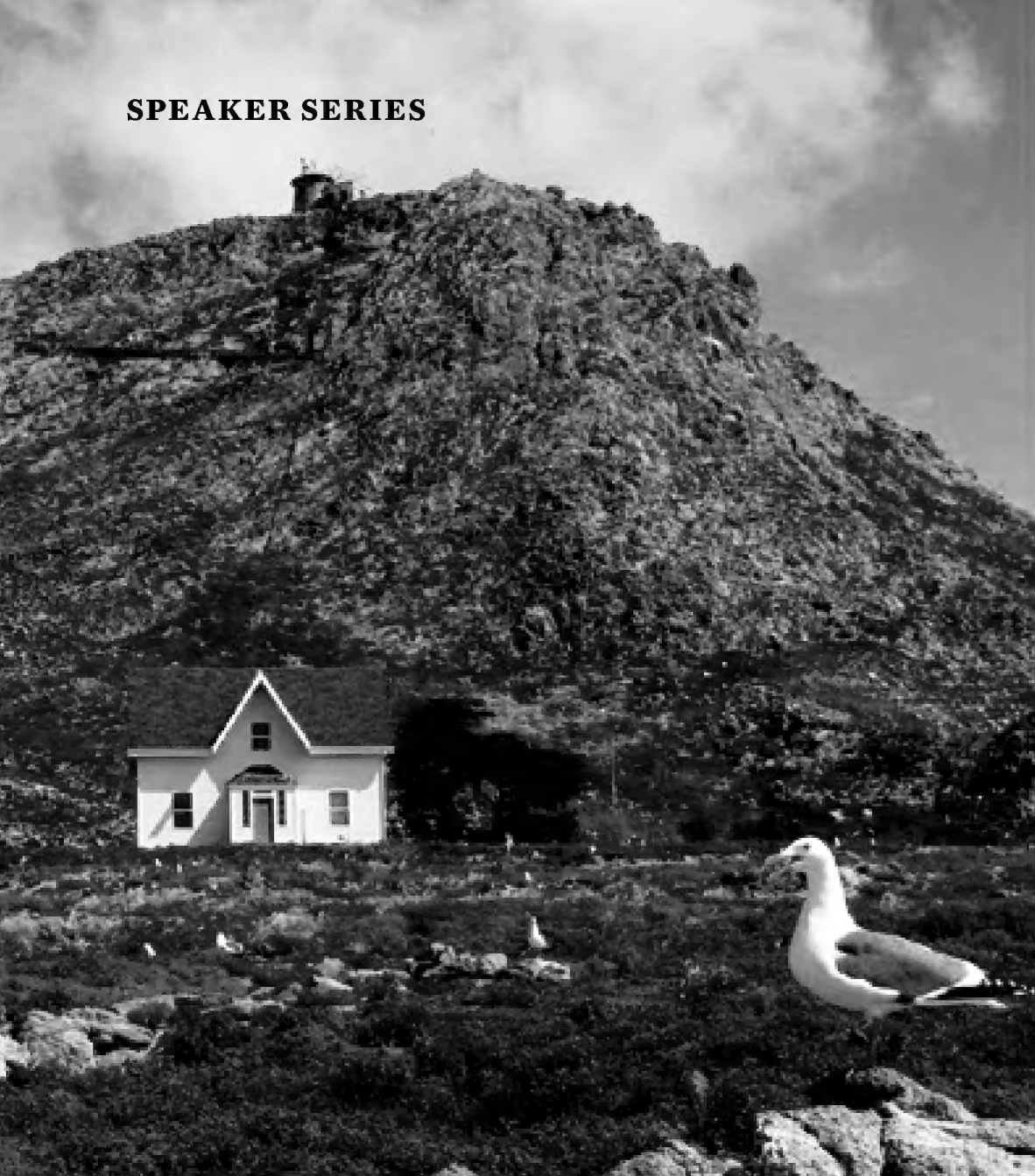


2005



2016

SPEAKER SERIES



Annie Schmidt

BIRDS ON THE FARALLONES

RUSS BRADLEY

LOCATION / DATE

Berkeley
Thursday, January 19
6:30 p.m. refreshments
7 p.m. program

The Farallon Islands, a National Wildlife Refuge, are legally part of the city of San Francisco but remain a truly wild place. The islands host the largest seabird colony in the contiguous United States, along with significant populations of marine wildlife like seals, sea lions, and white sharks, along with unique endemic terrestrial species. For almost 50 years, Point Blue Conservation Science (formerly Point Reyes Bird Observatory) has conducted monitoring, research, and conservation efforts on the islands. Learn about island wildlife and research, and how the Farallones can help us understand ecosystem change.

Russ Bradley is the Farallon program leader and a senior scientist for Point Blue Conservation Science. He has spent over 1,600 days on the Farallon Islands.

This is the first in a series of Centennial-year speakers on issues deeply entwined with Golden Gate Audubon's history. GGAS's very first conservation campaign involved stopping oil tankers from dumping contaminated ballast water near the Farallones.

San Francisco: First Unitarian Universalist Church and Center, 1187 Franklin Street (at Geary). Public transit, street parking, and parking in a lot for a fee are available. Directions: Visit uusf.org/contact and use the Map It! link on the left.

Berkeley: Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (between Solano and Marin). Directions: northbrae.org/contact--find-us.html.

DANCING GREBES AND VENTRILOQUIST OWLS

DAVID ARSENAULT

LOCATION / DATE

San Francisco
Thursday, February 2
6:30 p.m. refreshments
7 p.m. program

Plumas Audubon has been working to conserve grebes and owls, in cooperation with Audubon California and other chapters. Plumas citizen-scientists have determined how water level management affects breeding Clark's and Western Grebes. And they have studied the effect of forest management on the Flammulated Owl, a secretive neotropical migrant that eats only insects and nests in tree cavities.

David Arsenault, Executive Director of Plumas Audubon Society, is a wildlife biologist who has studied birds throughout the western U.S. and the Americas for more than 20 years.



Willie Hall

LEAST TERNS IN ALAMEDA

SUSAN EUING

LOCATION / DATE

Berkeley
Thursday, March 16
6:30 p.m. refreshments
7 p.m. program

California Least Terns—an endangered species weighing under 1.6 ounces—have nested on the tarmac of the former Alameda Naval Air Station for over 40 years. Managed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and now owned by the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs, this has become the most productive Least Tern breeding colony on the West Coast.

Susan Euing is the USFWS biologist who manages the Alameda Least Tern colony. She will share fascinating information about these amazing birds and the surprisingly uplifting history of how Golden Gate Audubon's citizen scientists and volunteers have aided in the decades-long recovery effort.



Eleanor Briccetti

Least Tern and chick in Alameda.

DONATIONS

Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education, and member activities!

Donations from September 1, 2016 through November 30, 2016

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Burrowing Owls.

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Cindy Margulis, 510.843.9912
cmargulis@goldengateaudubon.org

Education Director

Anthony DeCicco, 510.843.2222
adecicco@goldengateaudubon.org

Volunteer Coordinator

Noreen Weeden, 510.301.0570
nweeden@goldengateaudubon.org

Communications Director

Ilana DeBare, 510.301.5573
idebare@goldengateaudubon.org

Office Manager

Monica Moore, 510.843.2222
mmoore@goldengateaudubon.org

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP

Adult Education Chair

Maureen Lahiff, mlahiff@aol.com

Field Trip Coordinator

Steve Lombardi, Hotrock175@gmail.com

Travel with GGAS Coordinators

Pat Kirkpatrick, Patkirkpatrick14@gmail.com
Rubi Abrams, Rabrams2@pacbell.net

THE GULL AND WEBSITE

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Ilana DeBare, idebare@goldengateaudubon.org

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Report your unusual bird sightings: 415.681.7422

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January 25, 1917, and became a chapter of National
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Membership is \$35 per year. Renewals should be
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2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G
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9 a.m. – noon, and other hours by appointment
510.843.2222
goldengateaudubon.org
ggas@goldengateaudubon.org

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3 Honoring a Century of Work that Benefits Birds and People
We could have held a one-night gala... but opted for a year-long educational celebration.

17 Visit Our Centennial Exhibit
Whether you live in San Francisco or the East Bay, our traveling exhibit will come to a venue near you in 2017.

18 Speaker Series
Learn about birds on the Farallones, grebes and owls in Northern California, and Least Terns in Alameda.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Family Bird Walks
S.F., Oakland, & Berkeley
January – March
Explore winter wildlife with your kids! From January through March at 10 to 11:30 a.m. on first Saturdays at Pier 94 in San Francisco, third Saturdays at MLK Shoreline in Oakland, and fourth Saturdays at the Berkeley Marina. Please RSVP in advance to ggaseducation@goldengateaudubon.org.

Winter Birding Classes
Berkeley & the region
January through March
We have birding classes for all levels starting in January and February—Beginning, Advanced Beginning, Birding By Ear, and for those who want to venture further afield, Migrant Treasure Hunting in the Central Valley! All classes include field trips. See goldengateaudubon.org/classes for dates.

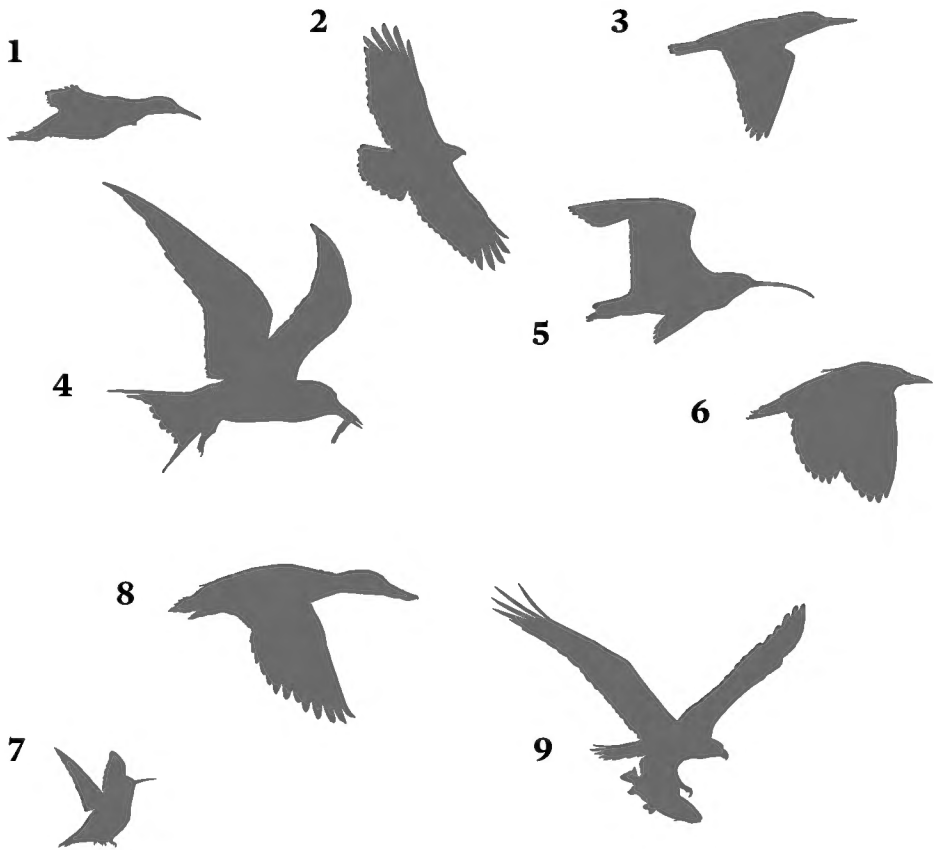
Restore Habitat for Wildlife
San Francisco, Alameda, & Oakland
Multiple dates each month
Spend a fun morning outdoors in nature weeding, planting, and making the Bay Area more welcoming to wildlife. We sponsor habitat restoration events almost every weekend. Adults and kids welcome; no experience needed. Bring a friend! For dates and locations near you, see goldengateaudubon.org/volunteer.



Sharon Beals

NAME THAT BIRD!

How many of the birds on our cover can you identify? Several are species that have benefitted from Golden Gate Audubon’s conservation work.



Answers

1. Ridgway's Rail (Bob Lewis); 2. Red-tailed Hawk (Jerry Ting); 3. Belted Kingfisher (Bob Lewis); 4. California Least Tern (Verne Nelson); 5. Long-billed Curlew (Jerry Ting); 6. Black-crowned Night Heron (Jerry Ting); 7. Allen's Hummingbird (Jerry Ting); 8. Northern Shoveler (Ken Lui); 9. Osprey (Doris Sharrock)